2: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
Kambara

222 the islands. Today the leaves of the cultivated sweet potato are also eaten. The stems, with the leaves adhering, are broken from the plants and placed in baskets which are strapped to the back in the same way as bundles of wood (p. 151).

Fruits, especially those eaten raw, are usually gathered by boys, but the *ndawa*, the Tahitian chestnut (*ivi*), and the *vala* are gathered under the supervision of grown men. On all the islands the Tahitian chestnut and *vala* are gathered and esteemed highly. In harvesting the *vala*, care is taken not to [48] harm the trees. Boys climb the tree and push or twist off the fruit clusters with a straight or a forked stick. The men gather them from the ground and boys or men carry them home in baskets on a stick resting on the shoulder. [482] Usually two baskets are carried on one stick, one behind, the other in front of the shoulder. The lower branches of the Tahitian chestnut tree are picked by hand. The upper branches are picked from the ground with a stick, or a boy climbs the tree to shake the branches and loosen the nuts with a stick.

222 Other fruits gathered from the bush are: *yaka* (*Pueraria thunbergiana*),
262 *yaumitha (Malaisia scandens)*, *yangai*, *tarai*, important especially on Fulanga; *songa* (the fruit of the mangrove) eaten on Fulanga and Ongea, *mbau levu*, *mbau thana*, preferred to the larger *mbau levu* because of its sweetness, *mbawaki*, and *nggalaka*.

[26] Arrowroot (*yambia*, *Tacca pinnatifida*), the tuber of which was formerly the staple on the volcanic islands, is eaten only in years of drought, except on Fulanga and Ongea, where it is eaten often. The arrowroot does not grow on Kambara.

[26] The *wangiri* nut, formerly the staple on the limestone islands and Kambara, is eaten occasionally on Fulanga and Ongea, but elsewhere only in times of famine. It does not grow on the volcanic islands.

[263] Sugar, extracted from wild ti root, is used to sweeten puddings.

Yavato, an edible grub (the larva of the long-horned prionid beetle, *Olethrius*) found in decaying trees, is highly prized. Men search for grubs in old tree trunks lying in the bush. On Kambara I watched a European-Fijian half-caste searching for grubs. The saliva ran from his mouth when he found an old trunk with many holes eaten into the wood. Roughly he cleaned off the dust of decaying, moulding wood with his hands and hastily ate 46 grubs.

The coconut crab (*unga vule*) is considered a great delicacy. The crab, which weighs up to 12 pounds, is caught by men who turn it on its back and [48?] tie vines around it so that the legs are lashed to the body. A stick is pushed under the vine and the crab is slung on the shoulder.

Birds' eggs are never gathered or eaten, but turtles' eggs, found on the beach, are relished.

3: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934) 1940 OQ6 Lau OQ6
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423 471 council would break the land deadlock in Fiji. Whether or not the measure would benefit the natives themselves would depend upon how wisely it was administered.

539 FOOD IS THE DAILY PROBLEM

Era vei talanoa, era nggoro
Wangga ni Mburotu ri ka sa na songgo
Uru tiko nai ndreke i na koro.
Nai mboi ni yasi kula, yasi ndromo,
Nai mboi ni mamba tu na mothelolo,
Nai mboi ni makita thuruoso
Ka laki mbotea na loma ni koro.

They were very much surprised
When we arrived in the Mburotu canoe
And anchored near the village.
The scent of red sandalwood, golden sandalwood,
The scent of *mamba* with *mothelolo,*
The scent of *makita*[34] creeps into the village
And fills it with fragrance.

From an ancient dance, Kambara.

773 261 THE KAMBARANS have a legend of Mburotu, the golden paradise isle of the departed, inhabited by extremely beautiful maidens with light skins like the Tongans. Mburotu is covered with fragrant plants and fruit trees on which the eternally ripe fruit hangs in golden clusters waiting to be picked. As soon as one fruit is picked another appears in its place. But Mburotu is only a wish fulfillment dream in striking contrast to the harsh reality of the everyday world. Food is still the immediate and daily recurring problem on the limestone islands (including Kambara) where garden land is scarce and natural resources limited. This is rendered more acute on account of the porous nature of the soil and lack of fresh water, which makes drought a frequent menace, and on account of devastating hurricanes which cause great destruction of crops and property.

[34] *Mamba, mothelolo,* and *makita* are sweet smelling plants.

5: Thompson E-5 (1933-1934)1949 OQ6 Lau OQ6

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The traditional diet was further safeguarded by an ingenious and self-regulating system of co-operative production and distribution, which encompassed all the local groups in the community. On each inhabited island an hereditary officer called the *vaka vanua* is custodian of the jungle fruits and crops. The traditional role of the crop custodian was to watch the island's food supply and, as each major food crop (whether wild or cultivated) matured, to place a tabu on it. When the custodian considered the crop under tabu to have ripened sufficiently, his traditional role was to remove the tabu and to arrange for the collection of first fruits by village and clan groups. The first fruits were then placed on the village ceremonial ground (*rara*) and divided by the custodian into two portions, one for the island chief and one for the people. The chief's portion was presented to the chief ceremonially by the custodian or by another officer of the aboriginal class, called the *takala*. The portion of the first fruits reserved for the people was divided by still another officer, called the headman of the ceremonial ground (*tui rara*),[20] a title hereditary in an aboriginal clan. It was the responsibility of this official to divide the food so that each clan received a fair share. When crops were
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abundant, part of the first fruits were set aside to be fermented and stored against time of scarcity. After the first fruits ceremony the people of the island were free to gather the remainder of the crop, each group from its own lands.

In this island community where food was none too plentiful and famine a constant threat, the institution of the crop custodian functioned, in total context, to conserve and augment the food supply of each island by preventing the crops from being consumed before they had attained their full size and maturity and their highest nutritive value. It thus served as a public health and resources conservation measure of considerable significance to guard against famine, to obtain the optimum size and food value of the crops, to insure a more equitable distribution of the limited food resources of the community as a whole, to build up community health through more adequate nutrition, and to accumulate a surplus in times of plenty for use in times of scarcity. It should be noted that on each island only the major food crops were placed under
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tabu. These differed from island to island and from season to season, depending on local conditions as judged by crop custodians, and thus the custodian institution had considerable flexibility.

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When the British system of indirect rule was established in Lau, however, the office of crop custodian was not incorporated into the administrative set-up. Indeed, its very existence was probably unknown to Europeans. Moreover, the Lauans soon became confused as to which chief should receive the offering of first fruits—the traditional island chief, whose office had not been recognized officially in the new government system, or the local village chief, an

[20] The *tui rara's* functions were performed on Fulanga by the *tui naro*, an aboriginal clan title.